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Forget posturing, we need bipartisanship

By Rep. Charles F. Bass

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The Monitor's July 15 editorial said Congress must act before the election on the impending fiscal cliff. I couldn't agree more.

New Hampshire and this nation need solutions, and the only way to achieve them is to put partisan posturing aside and to build bipartisan compromise. That is why I was one of three Republicans, joined by three Democrats, to introduce the only bipartisan, alternative budget offered earlier this year. Based on the president's National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, chaired by former Republican senator Alan Simpson and former Clinton chief of staff Erskine Bowles, this budget would tackle the disastrous fiscal cliff head-on.

At the end of the year, the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts will expire, the payroll tax cut ends, doctors will see their Medicare reimbursement rate slashed, and the mindless \$109 billion across-the-board cuts to vital domestic and defense programs will be implemented. Gone will be things like the marriage penalty tax cut and the child tax credit. Virtually every American family and worker will see their tax bill go up.

Without action before Dec. 31, experts at the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office forecast that the economy could slip into another recession - contracting by 1.3 percent in the first half of 2013.

A problem of this magnitude can be solved only if members of Congress come together to find bipartisan solutions that go beyond political talking points and attempt to address all aspects of the debt and deficit.

The Simpson-Bowles budget I supported, along with only 37 other Republican and Democrats, would reduce the deficit by more than \$4 trillion over the next 10 years by calling for \$3 trillion in responsible spending cuts and \$1 trillion in new revenue through tax reform. Spending cuts will be based on eliminating government waste from programs not producing a benefit to the taxpayer. New revenue would be generated by making the tax code fairer, simpler and more competitive. We can lower tax rates for individuals, small businesses and corporations by eliminating wasteful deductions and loopholes that oftentimes just benefit those in the top tax brackets. By closing these loopholes and deductions, money that was once never taxed will now be taxed at a lower and simpler rate, generating new revenue.

The plan, which was endorsed by both Simpson and Bowles, would also address the "doc fix" to ensure seniors on Medicare have access to the doctors they want, and it would eliminate the upcoming sequestration that will damage domestic and defense programs.

Unfortunately, there are those from both parties who choose to portray politically-motivated ideas as solutions, even though they don't address the core challenges facing our nation. The

administration's call to raise taxes on individuals and small businesses making over \$250,000 a year will not generate enough revenue over 10 years to cover the cost of even one year of current budget deficits, and there is nothing in their plan to address issues like the "doc fix" or sequestration. Just saying that we need to raise taxes on the wealthy and small businesses is not going to solve the fiscal cliff. In addition, just saying we can solve our budget crisis through spending cuts alone and that we should keep our complicated, unfair tax code in its current form is not a real solution either. Our country needs real solutions and serious ideas.

This won't be easy. As we saw during the budget debate this spring, there will be strong opposition on both ends of the political spectrum to any bipartisan plan. After the alternative budget failed, I supported the majority budget as it is the responsibility of the Congress to set a financial framework, but I still believe that the solution to our nation's debt crisis lies in this bipartisan approach. All the great policy accomplishments in our nation's history have resulted from the willingness of men and women of principle to resolve crises through compromise. We are facing a dire fiscal crisis that demands that same sort of compromise to keep our country from falling back into another recession. The Simpson-Bowles budget is a good place to start. I hope more members of Congress join me in recognizing that.

(Republican Rep. Charles F. Bass represents New Hampshire's 2nd District in Congress.)